**Proper implementation of the amendments of SOLAS Convention requiring the Verified Gross Mass (VGM) of international maritime exporting containers in Japan**

(Tentative translation of the press release issued from Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan, as of 28th July 2016)

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, (MLIT) has confirmed the proper implementation status of the SOLAS amendments in Japan, entering into force from July 1st 2016. The SOLAS amendments are requiring all maritime exporting containers to be weighed before loading on a ship by the methods in compliance with SOLAS amendments themselves.

1. Background

MLIT amended and issued relevant Ministerial ordinances and notices (cf. amendments of relevant regulations under Ship Safety Act and issuing of new notices to define the details) this April　to implement the SOLAS amendments. Parties in Japan who will verify the gross weight of containers must apply notification or registration to MLIT. And if VGM information of containers provided by the responsible person for VGM is lacked, such containers cannot be shipped.

1. Current status in JAPAN  
    As a result of an initial survey by MLIT about the situation right after the enforcement, it is confirmed that there are no major troubles in port terminals in Japan and VGM information is properly transmitted from Parties to port terminal operators and shipping companies in Japanese industries under the domestic regulations in accordance with the SOLAS amendments.
2. Remarks and other issues

For transshipment of containers in overseas, additional information such as the details of verification (ex. Place, Date, Method-1/2 etc.) which is not required by the SOLAS convention and the relevant guidelines, would possibly be sometimes requested by the local port authorities and/or shipping companies. In these cases, shippers or related entities responsible for VGM information have to consider the instructions issued by shipping companies if necessary in Japan.

(Supplements)

* Transmission methods for VGM information

A gate-in slip (cf. it is called “*han’nyu-hyou*” in Japanese) is mainly used for communicating VGM information from shippers or related entities to port terminal operators and shipping companies in Japanese industries, but the transmission methods for VGM information are not limited to a gate-in slip. Other electronic methods such as EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) are also available as transmission of VGM information on the premise of agreements between the parties concerning exporting containers.

* Gate-in slip (“*han’nyu hyou*”)

A signer of a gate-in slip is normally responsible for obtaining and providing accurate VGM information. If any doubt on declared weight is found, shipping companies and port terminal operators can inquire their shippers or agents through the signer of the gate-in slip. Therefore it has been recognized that a gate-in slip is one of useful methods for transmitting various characteristics of cargoes including accurate gross mass..

(Reference)

Please refer to the document titled “Institutionalization of the method of gross mass verification of maritime containers for export in JAPAN” in the following URL if you would like to know the abstract of Japanese domestic scheme of the SOLAS amendments.

<http://www.mlit.go.jp/common/001129801.pdf>